(b) to (d) Annual requirement of foodgrains as per existing level of allocations for TPDS, Other Welfare Schemes, calamity relief, etc. is about 52 million tons. In addition, required minimum reserves are also to be maintained as per norms. Stocks of foodgrains in the Central Pool are formed by the quantities of rice, wheat and coarse grains procured during the Kharif and Rabi procurement years. Allocation of foodgrains under TPDS are made for every month. Inflow and outflow of stocks in the Central Pool is a continuous process all over the year. Government is carrying out procurement of rice, wheat and coarse grains for the Central Pool under MSP based operations during relevant marketing seasons. As stated above, allocations have been issued under Targeted Public Distribution System, Other Welfare Schemes, for calamity relief, etc.

Price rise of essential commodities

3709. MS. MABEL REBELLO:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has accepted rise in prices of essential commodities, according to data by Ministry of Finance which shows that prices of cereals, pulses and vegetables have gone up by more than 12 per cent to 20 per cent in the last one year;

(b) whether according to data while overall inflation rate has been consistently coming down since November, 2008 and is currently in negative domain, prices of essential commodities are rising sharply; and

(c) if so, what are main reasons for rise of prices especially cereals and pulses and what steps Government has taken or proposed to take to check rise of prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Government is aware of the rise in prices of essential commodities such as Sugar, Pulses and potato.

(b) The overall WPI inflation as on 18.7.2009 was (-) 1.54% (provisional) and the Food Article inflation was reported at 9.19% (provisional).

(c) Rise in domestic prices is owing to the combined effect of different factors such as, growing demand on account of increase in population and income, hardening of international prices, changes in consumption pattern, diversion of food grains for fuel, adverse weather and climate change, increase in crude oil prices, hikes in MSP, improvement in income and living standards, increase in freight rates. Delayed Monsoon, hike to petrol and diesel prices on 1st July, 2009, increase in demand owing to rise in prices of pulses as well as seasonal factors have contributed to increase in prices of vegetables.

The Government has taken a number of steps to control the price rise and to soften the impact of price rise on consumers such as augmenting domestic supplies of foodgrains through imports at zero/reduced rates of duty and ban on exports. As a result of the various steps taken by Government, prices of certain essential commodities such as wheat, edible oils have generally declined or are steady.

Perishing of fruits and vegetables before reaching the customers

3710. SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large proportion of fruits and vegetables produced in India perish before reaching the customers;

(b) whether any study has been conducted to asses the extent of such wastage and if so, the details thereof;

(c) what are the steps taken by Government to minimize such wastage; and

(d) the details of the projects and programmes under implementation in Tamil Nadu in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. To assess the extent of wastage of fruits and vegetables, an Expert Committee was constituted by the Government of India which estimated the post harvest losses of horticultural produce at about 25-30% of the total production due to lack of adequate post harvest infrastructure facilities.

(c) and (d) With a view to minimize the wastage, the Government is implementing the following three schemes in the country including the State of Tamil Nadu:-

(i) Scheme of National Horticulture Board (NHB) involving development of commercial horticulture through production and post harvest management.

(ii) Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in North Eastern States, Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand (TMNE); and

(iii) National Horticulture Mission (NHM) for the remaining States of the country.

Under these schemes financial assistance is provided for setting up of cold storages, collection centre, pack houses, refrigerated vans, mobile processing unit etc. In Tamil Nadu State, so far an amount of Rs.202.40 lakhs has been provided for cold storage, pack houses, refrigerated vans and mobile processing unit.

Escalation of food prices

3711. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI SANJAY RAUT:
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state: